

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13
ACDA-12 SSM-03 HA-05 /091 W
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O 301511Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5800
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 7351

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, SY, FR
SUBJ: HIGHLIGHTS OF PRIMIN BARRE'S VISIT TO SYRIA

REF: PARIS 34777 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: OUR READING OF BARRE VISIT TO SYRIA, REINFORCED BY
FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE, IS THAT FRENCH AND SYRIANS EXCHANGED

VIEWS ON ME SITUATION WITH FRENCH COMMENTING FAVORABLY ON
SADAT'S RECENT INITIATIVES AND SYRIANS DISAGREEING STRONGLY.
ASSAD FIRMLY DENOUNCED SADAT'S JERUSALEM VISIT BUT EQUALLY
FIRMLY STATED THAT SYRIAN CONTINUED TO DESIRE A JUST PEACE
AND WAS NOT REPEAT NOT ON VERGE OF JOINING REJECTION FRONT.
ALL IN ALL, FRENCH APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MORE IMPRESSED BY
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SYRIAN ARGUMENTS THAN VICE VERSA. END SUMMARY.

1. HIGHPOINT OF PRIMIN BARRE'S THREE-DAY VISIT TO
DAMASCUS NOVEMBER 26-28 WAS TWO HOUR MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT ASSAD NOVEMBER 28. ACCORDING TO FRENCH EMBASSY
POLITICAL OFFICER, BARRE HAD SOUGHT EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON
MIDDLE EAST SITUATION AND HAD HIMSELF FOUND A NUMBER OF

POSITIVE ASPECTS TO PRESIDENT SADAT'S
RECENT INITIATIVES. ASSAD HAD STRONGLY DISAGREED.

2. IN EXPLAINING SYRIA'S POSITION ASSAD HAD SAID THAT
PRIOR TO SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL PEACE PROCESS HAD BEEN
MOVING FORWARD. US EFFORTS HAD BEEN ON THE WHOLE POSITIVE
AND WHILE HE RETAINED SOME RESERVATIONS REGARDING THEM, HE
WAS BASICALLY OPTIMISTIC. SADAT'S VISIT, HOWEVER, HAD
TOTALLY CHANGED SITUATION. SADAT HAD DIVIDED ARAB WORLD.
THIS HAD COMPLICATED ALL PEACE PLANS AND CREATED MAJOR
OBSTACLE TO HOLDING GENEVA CONFERENCE.

3. IN REPLY TO BARRE'S ASSERTION THAT SADAT'S VISIT HAD HAD
FAVORABLE IMPACT ON EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION AND HAD HELPED
REMOVE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS, ASSAD BLUNTLY STATED THAT HE
WAS DEALING WITH REALITIES NOT PSYCHOLOGY AND THESE
REALITIES WERE THAT ISRAEL WAS OCCUPYING ARAB TERRITORY AND
NOT RECOGNIZING LEGITIMATE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. IT WAS
CLEAR, HE SAID, THAT ISREAL WAS NOT DISPOSED TO MAKE ANY
CONCESSIONS AS RESULT OF SADAT VISIT.

4. LATER IN CONVERSATION, BARRE HAD NOTED THAT MANY
FRENCHMEN ADMIRERED SADAT'S COURAGE. ASSAD WONDERED IN REPLY
WHETHER FRENCH WOULD HAVE APPROVED OF DE GAULLE GOING TO
MEET HITLER DURING WORLD WAR II.

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5. SUMMING UP, ASSAD ASSURED BARRE THAT SYRIA WAS
NOT CHANGING ITS POSITION. SYRIA WAS NOT ON THE POINT
OF JOINING REJECTIONIST CAMP. IT CONTINUED TO DESIRE A JUST
PEACE. WHAT SYRIA WOULD NOW DO WOULD BE TO CONCERT WITH OTHER
ARAB STATES OPPOSED TO INDIVIDUAL
INITIATIVES TO SEE WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

6. ACCORDING TO FRENCH EMBOFF, ASSAD HAD IMPRESSED FRENCH
DELEGATION WITH HIS CALMNESS AND CONFIDENCE IN SOUNDNESS
OF SYRIA'S POSITION. AT NO TIME, EMBOFF SAID, HAD HE
BEEN CRITICAL OF US ROLE OR ACCUSE US OF BEING INVOLVED IN
SADAT'S INITIATIVE. HE HAD NOT ATTACKED SADAT PERSONALLY.

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7. FRENCH EMBOFF SAID THAT BARRE HAD EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING FOR SYRIAN POSITION IN OFF-THE-RECORD DISCUSSION WITH FRENCH JOURNALISTS LATE IN VISIT. HE SAID BARRE HAD BEEN GENUINELY IMPRESSED BY FIRMNESS AND SINCERITY OF SYRIAN POSITION AND ADMITTED HE HAD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF IT THAN WHEN HE CAME. BARRE HAD ALSO BEEN PLEASED THAT FRANCE WAS SUCCEEDING IN MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH SYRIA AND IRAQ DESPITE THEIR BITTER BILATERAL FEUD.

8. FRENCH EMBOFF SAID ATMOSPHERIES OF VISIT HAD BEEN EXCELLENT. FRENCH HAD NOTED THAT SYRIAN PRESS HAD NOT PUBLISHED THE PART OF BARRE'S TOAST TO KHULAYFAWI IN WHICH HE STATED FRENCH SAW POSITIVE ASPECTS TO SADAT'S INITIATIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, TISHRIN HAD PUBLISHED PORTION OF BARRE INTERVIEW ON SAME SUBJECT.
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9. SYRIANS, FRENCH EMBOFF SAID, HAD ACCEPTED GENERAL FRENCH LANGUAGE REGARDING POLITICAL SITUATION OF PROPOSED COMMUNIQUE. THEY HAD NOT SOUGHT SPECIFIC STATEMENTS REGARDING WITHDRAWAL OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS.

10. DURING VISIT, FRENCH FONMIN DE GUIRINGAUD SAW PNC CHAIRMAN, KHALID FAHUM. FAHUM HAD DESCRIBED PALESTINIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD SADAT VISIT AS FIRM AND HOSTILE. FAHUM

HAD SAID, HOWEVER, THAT PLO HAD NOT YET OFFICIALLY REPLIED TO INVITATION TO ATTEND CAIRO CONFERENCE. (PRESUMABLY THIS WILL COME FOLLOWING NOVEMBER 30 PCC MEETING.) FAHUM HAD REMARKED WITH REGRET THAT WHENEVER DIFFERENCES EMERGED BETWEEN EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS, PARALLEL DIVISIONS APPEARED WITHIN PLO. FAHUM SPOKE FAVORABLY OF US-SOVIET- STATE- MENT SAYING IT HAD GAPS BUT WAS ON THE WHOLE POSITIVE. BEFORE SADAT'S VISIT, FAHUM SAID, PLO MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIS- POSED TO MAKE CONCESSIONS FOR GENEVA BUT IT WAS NOW DIVIDED AND THERE WAS DANGER THAT ITS POSITION WOULD BE HARDENING.

11. FRENCH EMBOFF SAID THAT POINT HAD HAD TO BE MADE REPEATEDLY TO PRESS THAT BARRE'S VISIT HAD NO CONNECTION WITH SADAT VISIT TO ISRAEL OR OTHER MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS. DATES HAD BEEN SET OVER TWO MONTHS AGO AND VISIT HAD BEEN DECIDED ON IN PRINCIPLE DURING DE GUIRINGAUD'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS LAST FEBRUARY. HE SAID THE 55 JOURNALISTS WHO ACCOMPANIED BARRE HAD BEEN TOLD THIS REPEATEDLY AND THAT BARRE WAS NOT COMING TO DELIVER ANY MESSAGES OR TO TRY TO PERSUADE SYRIA OF ANY PARTICULAR POINT OF VIEW. ASKED ABOUT DE GUIRINGAUD'S ROLE IN VISIT, FRENCH EMBOFF REPLIED THAT HE HAD NOT SEEN REPORT OF DE GUIRINGAUD'S BRIEF PRIVATE MEETING WITH KHADDAM BUT IN MEETINGS WITH PRIMIN KHULAYFAWI AND PRESIDENT ASSAD, BARRE HAD DONE ALMOST ALL
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THE TALKING ON THE FRENCH SIDE.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

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